

## Masculinity and Chastity

If we think of the human person as a kind of incarnational spirit, a spirit-soul-body unity, we can approach the human person from many different perspectives. The human flesh, or the human body becomes a way of revelation of the real nature of the human being. This is something like the mystery of the Transfiguration. If we just consider the human being from the outside, how he looks in his bodily human nature, we do not understand who he is in the fullness of his identity. Similarly if we just say that a man is a rational animal (the early Greek definition), while we discover something more by emphasizing the human intelligence, we do not yet grasp the revelation of his being, his unique and unrepeatable existence. Man is an incarnated spirit and so he is penetrated by a significance way beyond what we philosophers can describe in our definitions.

Further, a man is not who he is by himself. He is not alone. He is a relational being. In fact, John Paul II suggests that we are more in the image of God when we are in a communion of persons than we are when we are alone. A seminarian has many unique kinds of relationships. There is a man-man relationship with his Bishop which partakes something of the mystery of a <sup>son - father</sup> father-son relationship. The priest-Bishop has this aspect, but there is also something else besides- including brother and bridegroom. Similarly in religious life there are women-women relationships of many different dimensions. Gender is introduced in man-woman relationship. Chastity is important in all of these human relationships.

What is masculinity and how does it relate to Priestly chastity? The answer to this difficult question must be situated in the two thousand year historical struggle of philosophers and theologians to understand three kinds of identity: personal identity, human identity, and engendered identity. It also needs to consider the different meanings of masculinity and of paternity in the Christian tradition. [CHART 1] For Christian philosophers, identity always involves relation of some kind. Personal identity involves relation to God and other persons, human identity involves relation with other forms of life, and sex and gender identity involves relations between women and men. To develop these three kinds of identity a little further, we could say that personal identity includes reference to being created in the image of God as a unique and unrepeatable person, with intellect and will and capacities for self-consciousness, choice, and action. It also includes reference to being in communion with other persons. Human identity refers to being a member of the species of rational animal, with a soul and body which has consciousness, sensation, reproductive and locomotive powers. The overhead chart gives a summary of these three kinds of identity.

It is also helpful at the beginning to make distinctions between male identity, masculine identity, and man's identity. Again an overhead chart may help clarify our thinking. [CHART 8] Using a geometrical model, we can see the distinction as including progressive dimensions of identity. In our analysis the details of these distinctions will hopefully emerge in a more vibrant way than the geometrical model might suggest. Sex and gender identity include male and female differentiation, feminine and masculine characteristics, and particular engendered acts of men and women.

Since our topic includes the relation of masculinity to chastity, it is important to note that what it means to be masculine has some relevance to all three levels of identity: personal, human, and engendered. Thus a masculine expression of the vocation to Sacramental Priesthood - a personal call from God and an abundant gift of grace to a particular man- will also have relevance to all three kinds of identity.

Our attempt to consider how masculinity relates to chastity will draw upon the work of three great Christian philosophers: Hildegard of Bingen, Blessed Edith Stein, and Pope John Paul II. All three of these philosophers consider masculinity within the total Christian mystery of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.<sup>1</sup>

*In First session - H.I.d. + E.S. (1) Context of all is "meaning of fatherhood concealed in man's masculinity"*  
*In Second session - PSP II (2) masculinity - femininity — bride many things.*

**Hildegard of Bingen**, a Benedictine Abbess who lived between 1098 and 1179 described masculinity in the context of engendered human identity. She considered its particular relation to the elemental structure of the male body, and she explored its effects in human character as it manifested itself both in sacramental marriage and in celibacy.<sup>2</sup>

For Hildegard the human person is a unity of soul and body.<sup>3</sup> In Hildegard's theory there is an equal dignity of all human beings- as a soul-body unity- which begins at their creation and is completed at their resurrection.<sup>4</sup> The union of soul and body also has different consequences for women and men because their embodied nature is sexually differentiated as female and as male. Hildegard explored the grounds for this difference, by drawing upon a medieval science of elements and humours.

It is here that her theory becomes somewhat controversial as she charted the intricate relations between the character traits, muscular structure, blood type, skin colour, biological fertility and character.<sup>5</sup> We could say today that **what** Hildegard was trying to do was right, that is, analyzing women and men by considering the intricate relation between soul, mind, and body, but that the **details** of her analysis were limited by her dependence on a primitive, and at times inaccurate, medieval science. [CHART 3] By way of passing, we should note, however, that Hildegard contributed greatly to many other areas of human life, to literature, art, music, and spirituality as well as to the beginnings of the empirical study of sexually differentiated identity. through her incredible genius.

Authentic masculinity was associated with a balanced personality, while its extreme forms were associated with weakness and effeminateness, on the one hand, and lack of moderation and violence, on the other hand. Analyzing the type of blood, colour of skin, fertility, and character of the men, she concluded that the best human father was the moderate, balanced man who also had honourable and fruitful relations with women. This second type of man was balanced, she argued, because of the presence of the "female element" air which moderated his male elements of fire and earth. In her complement analysis of four types of women, the second type she called "masculine" because of her character which tended towards efficiency.

Hildegard thought that each woman and each man had some portion of both masculine and feminine qualities. She described a feminine quality as working in a man like air moderates fire, it created a sensible understanding. It also supports a capacity for friendship between a man and a woman, who are able to look at one other straight in the eye rather than with arrow-like glances that possess or dominate. Masculinity was also associated with balance and moderation,

efficiency, and exactness in a woman. ~~[CHART 2]~~ The ideal type of person had an authentic balance of the quality of the opposite sex. In addition, she suggested that women and men were ‘the work of each other.’<sup>6</sup> Hildegard studied the effects of femininity and masculinity in both chaste and unchaste relations, and she concluded that the same balanced nature made a person both a good celibate and a good married person.

Hildegard’s interesting attempts to begin a philosophy of sex and gender differentiation recognize that there is an identity of the personality which is deeper than our bio-chemical identity but which depends upon it for its expression.

## II

**Blessed Edith Stein**, was born into a Jewish family in 1892. She became a Carmelite nun, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and her life was taken in Auschwitz concentration camp in 1942. Before her entrance into the Carmel of Cologne, in Germany, Blessed Edith lectured widely about masculine and feminine identity while she teaching in a Dominican College for Girls. She delved deeply into the delicate area of how the female body affects women’s consciousness and how the male body effects a man’s consciousness, at the same time she also opened up the whole question of divine call of a man or a woman to a particular vocation. Thus her probing of the implications of being engendered reached from the depths of our bio-chemical somatic structure to the heights of our personal and intimate relation with God who knew us before we were ever conceived. She thought that gender was a characteristic of the soul as well as of the body because a person was called to be a man or a woman. In a sense God made a

person a man or woman because he knew them before they were born. He knew who and what he would call them to be.

This Divine Call is captured in the passage from Jeremiah for instance where we hear: "The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; and appointed you as prophet to the nations.'" (Jer. 1: 4-6). In a similar way we can reflect on the fact that Abraham was called to be the father of Isaac and Ishmael, and that St. Joseph was called to be the adoptive father of Jesus.

Stein had immersed herself in the study of St. Thomas Aquinas to complement her doctoral study on the nature of empathy according to the phenomenological method of Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology reflects on the contents of consciousness to reach a philosophical intuition about the essence of something. It does not simply pass from a particular experience to a general conclusion, but rather hones away at the accidental aspects of something to grasp, by philosophical intuition, the essential characteristics of that thing. Blessed Edith Stein was the first philosopher to probe human consciousness to identify essential aspects of sex and gender identity by using this phenomenological method. In her lectures on women, she developed an extensive philosophy of gender and its relation to Christian vocation by posing numerous questions about how male and female engendered identity is experienced differently by men and women in their conscious lives.<sup>7</sup>

Blessed Edith Stein particularly emphasized sex and gender differentiation in the experience of human consciousness in both its fallen and its redeemed states. Like Hildegard, she emphasized that human identity was a lived-body-soul-unity; and she elaborated in detail the different complex structures of a woman and of a man which flowed from having this unified

soul body identity.<sup>8</sup> While both were persons of equal dignity as being created in the image of God, each gender had a more natural relation to certain characteristics because of a particular embodied nature. Woman had a natural access to a feminine identity because of her embodiment as female, while man had a natural access to a masculine identity because of his embodiment as male.

Edith Stein drew out further implications of complement masculine and feminine characteristics in ways that some critics suggest may be too stereotyped. While we may sometimes disagree with particular details of her conclusions, especially of masculine or feminine characteristics it must be acknowledged that **what** Blessed Edith was trying to do was extremely important for the history of Catholic philosophy.

Let us briefly consider a few of her conclusions here. [CHART 4] Blessed Edith thought that the corporeal structure of the male body naturally orients a man towards a paternal manner of generating by a forceful detachment from the body. As a result of this orientation towards generation by detachment, Stein suggests that a male is not very affected by the lived experience of the body, and he tends to receive values in the world through his intellect, he goes towards reasoned judgments of particulars, or the values of things or persons in the world in a compartmentalized way, and uses his will to make efficient and specialized choices.<sup>9</sup> This is the natural tendency of a man, and yet Stein argues that he can learn from women how to moderate these tendencies. In fact, she concludes that he should become educated in feminine values, just as a woman needs to moderate her natural feminine identity by learning masculine values.

Blessed Edith thought that a woman tends by nature to receive values in the world inwardly through her emotions, is strongly affected by the lived experience of her body which



is oriented towards receiving and nourishing new life from within, tends to judge things as an integrative synthetic whole, and thus uses her will to make personal and holistic choices. This feminine ethos, as she calls it, "embraces what is living, personal, and whole."<sup>10</sup> The corporeal structure of the female body naturally orients a woman towards a maternal kind of support for the growth of new life first within her body and then outside of the body; while the corporeal structure of the male body naturally orients a man towards a paternal manner of reproducing by detachment from body.

Stein's philosophy of sex and gender is situated in the midst of a Christian understanding of a fallen world. [CHART 5] She stresses the redemptive mission of men and women, to become whole and balanced personalities, permeated by the example and image of Jesus Christ. She argues that the fallen female nature tends towards possession, greed, extreme curiosity, and slavish dependence upon man, rather than towards healthy spousal and maternal concern for the value of the whole person, and the "right development of the beings surrounding her." And the fallen male nature tends towards domination over others, enslavement to work, too much abstraction, and atrophy of their humanity rather than towards mature paternal detachment, dedication, proficiency, objectivity, and determined specialization.

In the following passage from her lecture on "Vocations of Man and Woman" we find an explicit mention of human fatherhood and its challenge in a fallen world. I will quote from it in some length:

"...*fatherhood* appears as an original calling of man assigned to him along with his special vocation. On the one hand, the inclination to shirk his paternal duties is a sign of decadence; on the lowest level, this reveals itself in sexual intercourse simply for the sheer satisfaction of sexual desires without any concern for offspring; on a higher level, he may assume his material



obligations well but perhaps he will disregard completely his duty to share in the child's formation. On the other hand, there is danger of a brutal exercise of the prerogatives of fatherhood which limits motherhood to the merely physical care and deprives it of its higher functions and which, moreover, may authoritatively repress the unique aspirations of the new offspring.

All of the defects in a man's nature which cause him to fail in his original vocation are rooted in a perverted relationship to God. Man can fulfil his most noble vocation which is to be the image of God only if he seeks to develop his powers by subordinating himself humble to God's guidance.<sup>11</sup>

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Blessed Edith makes a similar analysis of women's original maternal calling.<sup>12</sup> For our purposes. Stein believes that the fall effected men and women somewhat differently, with respect to the paternal and maternal vocations. Both, however, are ordered to redemption through Jesus Christ.

The redemptive mission of women is situated in Stein's thought in the context of a vivid portrayal of fallen human nature, and the particular tendencies of a fallen **feminine** nature which tends towards possession, greed, extreme curiosity, and slavish dependence, rather than towards healthy spousal and maternal concern for the value of the whole person, and the "right development of the beings surrounding her."<sup>13</sup> Women are also called to engage in redemptive work in a world shaped as well by a fallen masculine nature which tends towards domination over others, enslavement to work, too much abstraction, and atrophy of humanity instead of mature paternal detachment, dedication, proficiency, objectivity, and determined specialization. Thus Blessed Edith concludes that the ethos of woman has the potential to transform a world permeated with masculine professions by bringing a feminine orientation towards the persons in it.<sup>14</sup>

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 Blessed Edith argues that even though the female body has a natural access to femininity and the male body has a natural access to masculinity, that women have a duty to become educated in masculine values and men have a duty to become educated in feminine values. Blessed Edith suggests that Jesus Christ perfectly developed his natural masculine and learned feminine characteristics.<sup>15</sup> She also notes with approval the strongly developed feminine qualities in male saints and the strongly developed masculine qualities in female saints. Conversely, a woman who neglects to develop her natural feminine identity or a man who neglects to develop his natural masculine identity is unlikely to develop a mature spiritual identity.

Let us digress a moment to consider first consecrated women's relation to the vow of celibacy and then return to consider a man's relation to Priestly celibacy. The vow of chastity adds a further dimension to the discovery and development of a woman's feminine vocation. Blessed Edith reflects often on the call to a vocation of virginity as offering "the most intimate, personal communion with the Saviour, the development of all faculties in His service, and spiritual maternity- i.e., the winning of souls and their formation for God."<sup>16</sup> She suggests that a woman's deepest feminine longing is to give herself in love to another.<sup>17</sup> When God elicits this gift from a woman in the call to a life of consecrated celibacy, and when a woman responds to this call with the total gift of herself, then her deepest longing may be fulfilled.<sup>18</sup>

For Stein, the fact that God calls a person to a particular vocation is a sign that the soul itself has a unique identity as a woman's soul or a man's soul from all eternity. This means that the body is not the only source of differentiation of man and woman. The radical significance of God's foreknowledge of Mary's place in world history is highlighted as the woman from all

time destined to be the person chosen by God for the miracle of the Incarnation.<sup>19</sup> In a similar way, each woman's soul has been known by God in its gender identity from the beginning of time.

The fulfilment of woman's feminine identity through a spousal gift of self in a call to consecrated chastity may be completed through her spiritual maternity which will try to safeguard and foster the new life which is given to her by this union in One Spirit with Jesus Christ. Mary at Cana is invoked as the prototype of the spiritually fertile woman, who surveys everything, discovers what is lacking, and finds the ways and means to procure the remedy. Spiritual maternity demands woman's ingenuity in many and varied ways.

Although Blessed Edith's lectures usually focused on women's vocations, she also referred at times to men's vocations. For example, she considers a priest's celibacy in the context of differentiating men and women's vocations. In a lecture in which she discusses Mary's virginity as a readiness to serve the lord with an undivided heart, she adds: "Of course, the celibacy of priests also is founded in their undivided readiness to serve the Lord. The difference between the two can be seen in the way the Lord permits the readiness to become actual service. He makes the priest His proxy and permits us to see the Lord Himself in the priest. In Mary we do not see the Lord, but we see her always by the Lord's side... She does not represent the Lord, but she assists Him... But Mary is beside Jesus not for His sake but for ours. ... In her virginity, she is the pure prototype of womanhood because she stands beside Him who is the prototype of all manhood and because she leads all humanity to Him."<sup>20</sup>

Again it is important to emphasize that for Edith Stein, even though our identity is formed in great part by the experience of our body as a male or a female, there is a supremacy

of the Spirit in our unique personal identity and vocation which is suffused with a relation with God before we were even created as a bio-chemical male or female being; and we must pay attend to this spiritual identity and its particular ways of being in the image and likeness of God.

Before considering our Holy Father Pope John Paul II's understanding of the relation between masculinity, celibacy, and fatherhood we will stop to discuss the information just presented.

----- **BREAK- end of first half hour presentation**

### III

**John Paul II** has written extensively on femininity and masculinity from the perspective of phenomenology, personalist philosophy, Marian and Carmelite religious foundations, and a vocation to the Diocesan Sacramental Priesthood.<sup>21</sup> He opens up the ethical and personal range of human acts in his writings which consider the respective responsibilities of women and men, the call of everyone to become acting persons, building communities of persons by intersubjective participation based on a love for the common good of all women, men, and children. Although his reflections are often stated in a metaphorical manner, they are based on an ontological foundation. There is a unique and foundational identity that is captured in his view that the meaning of masculinity is found in fatherhood. This ontological identity of fatherhood holds for biological fathers, for adoptive fathers, and for the fatherhood of priests.

The Pope says that women and men are two ways of being a person as a lived soul-body unity. The bodily somatic, emotive and psychic aspects of human consciousness, as well as the

intellectual and volitional aspects of human identity are integrated into masculine and feminine ways of being persons. An acting person achieves personal integration and mature participation in community through authentic living of what he calls the 'personalistic commandment' to always treat another person as a someone worthy of love. Therefore, women and men love authentically in **some similar** and **other different** ways.<sup>22</sup> He concludes that men and women become authentic persons in complementary ways.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to both Hildegard and Blessed Edith Stein, John Paul II tends to limit the use of 'masculine' to just men's way of being a person, and 'feminine' to just women's way of being a person.<sup>24</sup> In his early work, *Love and Responsibility* Karol Wojtyla described masculinity as **discovered** in a woman's emotional attitude or response to a man, not to his body or his sex, but to his specific value for her as a human being of the other sex.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, femininity is rooted in a man's response to the value of a woman as a whole, and not just to her body or sex. In this way, he suggests that we **discover** femininity or masculinity in relation. Thus masculinity is not a sensual value but initially an objective value of the male way of being a person revealed first through consciousness of sentiment or emotion. When a person of the complement sex is reduced to an object of pleasure or utility, then their masculinity or femininity can be also reduced, and their value as a male or female person is reduced for the beholder; but the root objective meaning of masculinity or femininity is of the person as an integral being of the complement sex, who is experienced as a male or female someone worthy of love.

Many of the particular characteristics cited by the two previous Christian philosophers as feminine or masculine would be considered simply as human or personal characteristics by the Pope. And yet he does allow for a few characteristics naturally associated with women and

with men. He links masculinity and paternity, and femininity and maternity in his essays on *Genesis*. Here, reflecting on the moment in history when Adam and Eve first conceived and bore a child, he says: "On this threshold, man, as male and female, stands with the awareness of the generative meaning of his own body: masculinity conceals within it the meaning of fatherhood, and femininity that of motherhood."<sup>26</sup>

An important aspect of Pope John Paul II's analysis of fatherhood and motherhood relates to his analysis of the human person as being fulfilled by acts. Identity resides in becoming an acting person, and the identity of a father or mother is not a simply biological reality which a man or woman undergoes. It is a way of acting in relation to other persons. In the same analysis of *Genesis* John Paul II states that: "Procreation brings it about that the man and the woman (his wife) know each other reciprocally in the 'third' spring from them body... [K]nowledge" in the biblical sense means that the 'biological' determination of man, by his body and sex, stops being something passive, and reaches the specific level and content of self-conscious and self-determinant persons. Therefore, it involves a particular consciousness of the meaning of the human body, bound up with fatherhood and motherhood."<sup>27</sup>

*chart*

Thus fatherhood participates in the generative activity of the Primary Paternity of God, the Father, not so much as a biological energy, but the more it participates in the image and likeness of God in the realm of intellect and will in self consciousness and self determination. When human fatherhood flows from acts of self-conscious choice and willed self-determination, and when it participates in genuine acts of self-gift to another in love, it expresses more perfectly the image and likeness of its Creator than the simple biological release of seed. The centrality of act to the meaning of fatherhood is the reason why Saint Joseph is so revered as the human



father of Jesus. In *Guardian of the Redeemer*, the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter on Sr. Joseph, we read the following reference to St. Augustine: "By reason of their faithful marriage both of them deserve to be called Christ's parents, not only his mother, but also his father, who was a parent in the same way the he was the mother's spouse: in mind, not in the flesh."<sup>28</sup>

Again it may be useful to digress for a moment to consider women's vocations before we return to men's vocation to Holy Orders. John Paul II believes that some feminine characteristics are associated with women in the same two specific ways we noted in Blessed Edith Stein: first, in woman's way of receiving new life, and second, in woman's way of fostering the growth and development of new life in the self and in others. In fact, his recent development of a theory of the genius of woman is built upon these two natural feminine characteristics.<sup>29</sup> [CHART 6]

Mary, the Mother of God, provides the prime model for both the spousal and the maternal forms of femininity. As John Paul summarizes it, Mary "signifies the fullness of the perfection of 'what is characteristic of woman,' of 'what is feminine.'"<sup>30</sup> In his Apostolic Letter on Women, we read that "...Mary exercises her free will and thus fully shares with her personal and feminine "I" in the event of the Incarnation."<sup>31</sup> Note that it is Mary's action, her way of doing something that is feminine here. Her intellect and will are given over to God, in a free, total, act of self-gift, during which Mary first conceives in her mind, and then in her body the Word made flesh.<sup>32</sup> Mary's motherhood is personal before it is biological.

Mary is also the first person to respond to the call to consecrated celibacy; hers is a feminine response to the gift-presence of Jesus Christ, Eternal Word made man.<sup>33</sup> The call of consecrated religious is to follow in Mary's footsteps by responding to the love of God with the



gift of our their love.<sup>34</sup> Women living the consecrated vow of chastity provide a prime model for the spousal dimension of religious vocation, and John Paul II says in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, that men religious and priests live this spousal bond **analogously**.<sup>35</sup>

In the second aspect of femininity, its maternal form, Mary, as the woman referred to in *Revelations* 12:4, stands before the serpent who wishes to devour her child, and she protects and fosters the development of the new life which has been entrusted to her.<sup>36</sup> Here we discover woman's special destiny to do battle with evil. John Paul II emphasizes that God entrusts human beings to women in a special way - "precisely by reason of their femininity-" and that this entrusting determines women's vocation in a particular way.<sup>37</sup> Women work to bring to fulfilment the life that is given to another. Women's way of accomplishing this mission in union with Jesus Christ releases various forms of women's genius.<sup>38</sup>

It is important to note that femininity is thought of as something, that although present at our creation, whose real value and meaning is more fully discovered later in life. Thus femininity is a dynamic reality, it is not totally given in the body alone or in the soul alone, but it is ultimately revealed through acts and relationship. The Pope often says that the value of femininity must be **found, discovered, and realized**. It depends upon how fully a woman can open up the depths of her being to another person and particularly to the Divine Persons. It is here that the mysterious fruitfulness of ascetical practice of the vow of chastity begins to flourish with its infusion of the grace which opens the depths of a woman's heart to the lived mystery of dying and rising with Christ. John Paul II concludes his reflections on the *Dignity and Vocation of Women* by reminding us that: "In the Spirit of Christ... women can discover the

entire meaning of their femininity and thus be disposed to making a 'sincere gift of self' to others, thereby finding themselves."<sup>39</sup>

For Pope John Paul II we become fulfilled as persons by our acts. This is how we find ourselves, by exercising our intellect and will, in mature acts of self-gift to others to build up the common good. Thus you become a person when you act personally, and you become more masculine the more you act like a man, and more feminine the more you act like a woman. This call to fulfilment as a man or a woman is a great adventure of the spiritual life. In this way, John Paul II emphasizes that the true meaning of masculinity or femininity is not something passive, but rather is found in the highest form of action. It is a man's or a woman's way of acting in the world through a sincere gift of self for others.

John Paul II describes the essence of masculinity as something that is progressively revealed in its inner depth, through nuptial love and through paternity. In a consideration of Sacramental Marriage, he says that it is the essence of masculinity to have sufficient self-possession to receive the gift of a woman- his spouse, and to offer the gift of self back to the woman and to the family which may issue from the union of love. How does man receive the gift of woman? In his Apostolic Letter *On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman*, we read that "the woman's motherhood presents a special call and special challenge to the man and to his fatherhood."<sup>40</sup> This flows from the fact that motherhood in the woman is not simply bio-physical, but is personal-ethical. In addition, because of the mother's unique orientation towards the whole person in her relation with the child, the Holy Father suggests that "The man- even with all his sharing in parenthood- always remains 'outside' the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to learn his own 'fatherhood from the mother."<sup>41</sup> So the

married man has to receive the gift of the teaching of the mother as well as of her dependent need for his help in caring for and educating their child.

In his description of the fatherhood of St. Joseph we find these qualities embellished along with the characteristic of the total gift of self in life and work in a hidden guardianship of the Word made flesh. Even St. Joseph discovered the depth of his fatherhood through the events of life. He discovered his unfolding relation with Jesus Christ- which is true for all of us. At first St. Joseph had decided to not marry the pregnant woman he was engaged to. In a sense Jesus was the unwanted child. But the angel jolted Joseph into accepting his fatherhood. He had to adopt this woman and this child to become a father. As we find in the document #20 "From the beginning Joseph accepted with the 'obedience of faith' his human fatherhood over Jesus. And thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings through faith, he certainly **came to discover** every more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood."<sup>42</sup>

In another crucial experience or jolt in the life of St. Joseph we find him later abruptly oriented away from the prerogatives of his own fatherhood towards the prime paternity of God, The Heavenly Father. Recall the passage from Luke when Jesus was lost from his parents for three days, teaching in the temple. In Scripture we read that his mother Mary said to him: "Son why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously," - --referring to Joseph as his earthly adoptive father, but Jesus answered: "Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?" ---referring to his Heavenly Father Abba. In this short conversation, which Joseph only overheard, he was sharply reminded who Jesus' Primary Father is. We are also reminded who our Primary Father is.

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This jolt of St. Joseph brings us also into the mystery of our relationship with The Father from whom we came and to whom we are going. We are brought into the mystery of Divine Paternity and its dynamism of love for the Son, Jesus Christ, Word made flesh. Divine Paternity is Primary Paternity, and human paternity is participation in Primary Paternity. To the extent that human paternity expresses human acts of choice, knowledge, and self-gift this participation will become more perfect, more fully of love, and holy, and share more of the eternal life of the reign of God.

How do these reflections on masculinity and paternity relate to the call to the masculinity and fatherhood of the Sacramental Priesthood and to a life of celibacy? By drawing upon two sources of Pope John Paul II, the encyclical *Shepherds After My Own Heart* and *Holy Thursday Letters to My Brother Priests* and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1974) *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* we can draw out some important principles for our topic.

In the first case, an ordained priest, by his <sup>promise</sup> of chastity becomes progressively confirmed to Jesus Christ, who was chaste and pure. In his Virgin Life, Jesus was always available to the Father. No one possess Him alone, everyone can possess Him. In the Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Formation of Priests, Pope John Paul II describes celibacy as having a crucial place in the configuration of the Priest to Jesus Christ as Spouse, as total self-gift to His Bride the Church. He describes the Church, as the Spouse of Jesus Christ, wishing to be loved by the priest in the total and exclusive manner in which Jesus Christ her Head and Spouse loved her. He concludes that priestly celibacy is the free and repeated gift of himself *in* and *with* Christ *to* his Church..."<sup>43</sup> In the depths of his self conscious being, the priest comes to know

who he is. In his free self determination, he gives himself unreservedly in love to his bride. The documents repeat over and over again that "Celibacy precisely is a 'gift of the Spirit.'"<sup>44</sup> It is a divine gift of grace. A free gift of the self in love.<sup>45</sup> Even a "falling in love."<sup>46</sup>

John Paul II also opens up for us the way in which the masculinity of the priest opens to fatherhood, or reveals its meaning in fatherhood when he says: "Celibacy, then, is to be welcomed and continually renewed with a free and loving decision as a priceless gift from God, as an "incentive to pastoral charity," as a singular sharing in God's fatherhood and in the fruitfulness of the Church, and as a witness to the world of the eschatological Kingdom."<sup>47</sup> There are two aspects of this description that need to be noted: the participation of the Priest in the spiritual fatherhood of God, and the priest's call to pastoral charity.

How does the Sacramental Priest share in the fatherhood of God and the fruitfulness of the Church? To answer this question, we need first to consider what we mean by Divine Paternity. God, the Father **eternally begets** His Beloved Son, the Word out of the goodness of his nature. God eternally generates out of love. This eternal incorporeal begetting is different from the generating of human fathers which is always material and limited by space/time. God eternally begets the Son and he continues to generate us. If God the Father does not continue to function as Creator and Sustainer of the world, we do not exist.

In a man, the operation of generation is separate from his identity. We do not usually like it if someone says we are just our operation or function, a student, a welder, or a father or even a seminarian for example. With God, however, it is different. His operation is his very self. His operation is the act of self-giving love and receiving love. His identity is to be Father eternally

generating His Son, the Eternal Word. Philosophers call this the ontological Fatherhood of God. It is God's essential nature to be Father. God, the Father is "eternally generative by nature."<sup>48</sup>

Now we can draw out two essential principles of Divine Paternity: 1) active self-giving love to another and 2) active love which receives another. In God all is act. Nothing in God is potentiality. Nothing in God is passivity. God is the act of love in these dual dimensions of active self-giving and active receiving of another. In the letter of John we read: "God is love." (4:8,16). God's ontological identity is Love. Just as the self-giving eternal begetting of the Father is act, so also the exchange of love among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which the being of the Son is received by the Father is act.<sup>49</sup>

The natural human paternity of a man also partakes of the identity of self donation as a going forth out of himself towards another, a woman; and if there is a conception, towards the child. At the same time, since the conception of a human child is a material conception, it participates in the generative activity of God, the Father as a simple trace of the Divine likeness in the material world. The more a father can participate in human generation through personal acts of his intellect and will, the more fully will He participate in the Primary Paternity of God, the Father. It is this progressive or developmental sense of fathering which opens to the mystery of the Christian vocation or call to be a father.

To further this progressive sense of generating, let us consider the example of Mary at the annunciation. Philosophers such as Augustine, Thomas, and John Paul II describe her fiat as a conception in the mind, and an act of will and intellect, before it is a conception in her body. John Paul summarizes this in his encyclical *Mother of the Redeemer*: "She conceived this Son in her mind before she conceived him in her womb..."<sup>50</sup> This is an important point to note



and it has analogical application to human fathering. Human generation, the more it participates in the nature of a human act, of exercise of intellect and will, the more it will participate in the Primary Paternity of God. This is why human fathers who adopt a child are real fathers by their acts, and why Sacramental Priests are real fathers by their acts.

Sacramental Priests are celibate fathers. The fruitfulness of their celibacy is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the Son to us; and the Son reveals the Father. "Priestly celibacy is a communion in the celibacy of Christ," and it issues in the spiritual fruitfulness of Christ's mission on earth.<sup>51</sup> Priestly celibacy builds up the reign of God. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit by which the ordained man shares in the true Fatherhood of God, through Jesus Christ.

John Paul II then describes the way that the priest, in self gift to his Church, becomes a true father: "Through his celibacy, the priest becomes 'the man for others,' in a different way from the man who, by binding himself in conjugal union with a woman, also becomes, as husband and father, a man 'for others,' especially in the radius of his own family: for his wife, and, together with her, for the children, to whom he gives life. The priest, by renouncing this fatherhood proper to married men, seeks another fatherhood..."<sup>52</sup> The Priest brings children to birth through the Sacraments of Initiation, he provides for them through the Word and Eucharist, he protects them by his life of virtue and service, and he sends them forth at the end of Mass.

In *Norms for Priestly Formation* we find natural fatherhood and spiritual fatherhood compared: natural fatherhood has "an altruistic spirit, the assumption of heavy responsibilities, a capacity for love and a dedication enough to make any sacrifice, daily bearing of life's burdens and difficulties, and prudent care for the future." Yet the fatherhood of Ordained Priests is



described as being "even more responsible and heroic."<sup>53</sup> When lived well, it participates in the Divine Paternity of God by its acts of will and intellect poured out in a life of charity.

The Holy Father states unequivocally that the Priest is called to be "a man of charity."<sup>54</sup> What is this Pastoral Charity which is the paternal dimension of the celibate priesthood? John Paul II describes some of its characteristics in a priest as follows: He feels compassion for those harassed and helpless, he goes in search for those who stray, he joyfully celebrates their return, he gathers and protects, he spreads a table and nourishes with his own life, he offers his life for others. Pastoral charity flows from the configuration of the priest to Christ, the Good Shepherd.<sup>55</sup> The essence of pastoral charity, according to John Paul II flows from the total gift of the self to the Church, and its highest realization is in the Eucharist where Bridegroom and Bride celebrate the Sacrament where the priest makes present once again the sacrifice of the cross.<sup>56</sup> In this action we see how and why "[t]he ministerial priesthood demands a special kind of love, which is called pastoral charity, by which a priest endeavours to give his entire life for the salvation of others."<sup>57</sup>

From Pope John Paul II we learned that identity resides in becoming an acting person, in man's doing something in a particular way and in being fulfilled in act; and thus, celibate Priests for the kingdom of heaven fulfil their vocation which is to live the life of the perfection of charity, acting the transfigured Christ. To become progressively transfigured into Jesus Christ is to realize a fuller humanity. For a man, to discover- through the masculine offer of his identity as Bridegroom for the Church, his bride- the wonderful fruitfulness of a genuine fatherhood.

We could say that the glory of all Christian fatherhood spends some time on Mount Calvary. Jesus told us that who ever sees Him sees the Father. In the Gospel of John, the night before He died, Jesus shared with his Apostles that He was about to enter into His glory in a new way. In freely laying down his life for those he loved, He prayed the following words: "Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was." (Jn 17:5) This is the glory of the Primary Paternity of God, the Father who poured his love into His Beloved Son. This is also the glory of being a father of a human child. This is the glory of being an adopted father of a human child.<sup>58</sup> And this is the glory of being a spiritual father as an ordained Priest.<sup>59</sup> This glory goes forth in love to others. It provides, it nourishes, and it protects even to dying to self. This is the vocation of all men to discover the glory of becoming evermore fully a father in the image and likeness of God, our Father.

We said earlier that masculinity conceals the meaning of fatherhood. Those fathers who reveal the true glory of their masculinity, in a kind of transfigured existence, will radiate an ontological fatherhood which participates in the Fatherhood of God. If you want to get a glimpse of the Fatherhood of God, when you are living chastely, look in the mirror and you will see. That is why we call you Father.

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February 14, 1998

## REFERENCES

1. Without wanting to suggest a direct link among them, I would like to indicate areas of accord particularly with respect to sex and gender differentiation and the call to Christian holiness. In my description I will use the word 'gender' to include conscious and biological sexual differentiation because of its root meaning which is associated with the words 'gens', 'engender', and 'generation'.
2. Hildegard developed her philosophy of femininity in the context of Benedictine monastic life, with its agrarian roots, hospitality to pilgrims and the sick, intellectual heritage, frequent interaction of men and women, and contemplative prayer. For a more detailed description of her theory see, Prudence Allen, RSM, "Hildegard of Bingen's Philosophy of Sex Identity," *Thought*, vol 64, no. 254 (September 1989): 231-241 and Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).
3. The soul, she said, wander[s] everywhere through the body, "like a caterpillar spinning silk;" it acts in the human being in the same way as "a bee forms honey in its comb;" it flows "through the body like sap through a tree." Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber compositae Medicinae* also known as *Causa et Curae* and translated into German as *Heilkunde* (Salzburg: Otto Muller Verlag, 1957), 126. Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Divinorum Operum*, also known as *De Operatione Dei* and translated into English as *Book of Divine Works* (Sante Fe: Bear and Co., 1987), and *Scivias*, trans. Mother Columbia Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), Book One, Vision four: 25, 123.
4. This complete union of soul and body is important for Christian philosophy because it explains the need for the resurrection of the body. At the same time, it also rejects the unisex model which rejects the importance of the body for personal identity and often supports reincarnation. See Hildegard, *Scivias*, Book One, Vision Four, 16, 119-20. For a detailed study of the history of the debate between Platonic based theories which support belief in reincarnation and Aristotelian based theories which support belief in resurrection of the body see, Sister Prudence Allen, RSM *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution (750BC-1250AD)* (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997).
5. Hildegard of Bingen, *Hielkunde*, 135-148. Woman, she thought, had more of the middle elements of air and water, and thus more of the humours, while man had more of the extreme elements of fire and earth. In addition, in her consideration of woman she added medical observations of the quality of menstruation and diseases after menopause, while for men she added character traits of children. Although Hildegard recognized the presence of an ovum in women, she followed the Aristotelian tradition, as interpreted by Galen, which claimed that women's seed was infertile and functioned primarily as a secretion. The male seed alone was fertile and led to the particular character of the child conceived.

6. From the moment of Creation, "[m]an and woman are in this way so involved with each other that one of them is the work of the other [opus alterum per alterum]. Without woman, man could not be called man; without man, woman could not be named woman." Hildegard, *Divine Works*, Part One, Vision Four: 100-123.

7. These lectures are published in Edith Stein, *Woman* (Washington DC: ISC Publications, 1996). For a more detailed consideration of her philosophical method see, Prudence Allen, "Edith Stein: The Human Person and Male and Female," chapter 12 in *Images of the Human: The Philosophy of the Human Person in a Religious Context*, eds. Leonard A. Kennedy, et. al. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995): 397-432.

8. For a more detailed comparison of these two theorists see Prudence Allen, "Sex and gender differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein," *Communio* 20 (Summer 1993): 389-414.

9. Stein, "Spirituality of Christian Woman," *Woman*, 94-97.

10. Stein, "The Ethos of Women's Professions," *Woman*, 45.

11. Stein, "Vocations of Man and Woman," 73.

12. She arranges a hierarchy of values which gives man's primary vocation to be ruler, and secondary vocation to be paternal; while woman's primary vocation is maternal and her secondary vocation is to be ruler. The analysis and critique of this position is outside the range of the presentation, but should be noted. See "Vocations of Man and Woman," 73-4.

13. Stein, "Vocations of Man and Woman," *Woman*, 78.

14. Stein describes it this way in "Ethos of Women's Professions, "Thus the participation of women in the most diverse professional disciplines could be a blessing for the entire society, private or public, precisely if the specifically feminine ethos would be preserved", *Woman*, 50-51. Stein also suggests often that woman's particular part, similar to Mary, is to engage in the battle with evil. It is important to note that Stein distinguishes between professions and vocations, so that while a woman may practice a masculine profession, she is not called to the male vocation of Sacramental priesthood.

15. Stein says in "Vocations of Man and Woman," "Whether man or woman, whether consecrated or not, each one is called to the imitation of Christ. The further the individual continues on this path, the more Christ-like he will become. Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection: in Him all bias and defects are removed, and the masculine and feminine virtues are united and their weaknesses redeemed; therefore, His true followers will be progressively exalted over their natural limitations. That is why we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them while in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination." *Woman*, 84.

16. Stein, "Spirituality of Christian Woman," *Woman*, 101.

17. Stein reflects in "Ethos of Women's Professions" that "the motive, principle, and end of the religious life is to make an absolute gift of self to God in self-forgetting love, to end one's own life in order to make room for God's life....", *Woman*, 53.

18. Stein, "Ethos of Women's Professions," *Woman*, 53. See also Stein, "Problems of Women's Education," where she says "To be the bride of Christ means to belong to the Lord: it means to put the love of Christ before all things, not merely by theoretical conviction but in the tug of the heart and in practical life. To become so one must be detached from all creatures, free of a fixation on oneself and on others; and that is the deepest, most spiritual meaning of purity.", *Woman*, 203.

19. Stein, "Vocations of Man and Woman," "...He bound Himself so intimately to one woman as to no other on earth: He formed her so closely after His own image as no other human being before or after; He gave her a place in the Church for all eternity such as has been given to no other human being. And just so, He has called women in all times to the most intimate union with Him: they are to be emissaries of His love, proclaimers of His will to kings and popes, and forerunners of His Kingdom in the hearts of men. To be the Spouse of Christ is the most sublime vocation which has been given, and whoever sees this way open before her will year for no other way.", *Woman*, 84.

20. Stein, "Problems of Women's Education," 200.

21. The most important sources for his personalist philosophy of sex identity is found in the following works, listed in chronological order: Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), originally 1960; *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: Holland/Boston: 1979), originally 1969); Pope John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981); Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women), (Boston: St. Paul Media, 1988); and *The Genius of Women* (A compilation of statements from 1995) (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1997). To situate John Paul II's personalist philosophy in the history of the philosophy of sex identity see, Prudence Allen, "Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion," *Communio* vol. xvii, no. 4 (Winter 1990: 523-544.

22. This commandment of love is called by him the "personalistic norm," and it becomes the measure of all ethical action. See, Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 41 and 66-67.

23. In his *Letter to Women*, he expresses it this way: "Woman complements man, just as man complements woman: men and women are complementary. Womanhood expresses the 'human' just as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way." #7. See *The Genius of Women*, 52.

24. This may be a linguistic rather than a substantial difference, but the result is that for John Paul II there is a singular line of development which includes the nexus {male, masculine, man} and {female, feminine, woman} while for Hildegard and Blessed Edith Stein there is a triangular



configuration which includes the nexus {male, natural masculine and educated feminine, man} and the nexus {female, natural feminine and educated masculine, woman}. Evidence that there is not a substantial difference may be found in the following passage from *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "The man - even with all his sharing of parenthood- always remains 'outside' the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to learn his own 'fatherhood' from the mother.," #18.

25. Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 110, 112, 124, 150-155.

26. John Paul II, *On the Original Unity of Man and Woman*, 166.

27. John Paul II, *On the Original Unity of Man and Woman*, 156-7.

28. John Paul II, *Guardian of the Redeemer*, #7 (and note 13).

29. See *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "This unique contact with the new human being developing within her gives rise to an attitude towards human beings- not only towards her own child, but every human being- which profoundly marks the woman's personality. It is commonly thought that women are more capable than men of paying attention to another person." #18 In *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla suggests that even women who have never had the experience of generating a biological child has the same orientation towards people because her body prepares her to receive new life through its monthly cycles. "...the woman's sexual rhythm prepares her every month to conceive a child and adjusts her whole organism to this very purpose. This is the origin of that feeling for the child which sexology calls the maternal instinct...", 280. See also "Letter to Women," in *The Genius of Women*, "Progress usually tends to be measured according to the criteria of science and technology... Much more important is the social and ethical dimension, which deals with human relations and spiritual values. In this area, which often develops in an inconspicuous way beginning with daily relationships between people, especially within the family, society certainly owes much to the "genius of women." #9, 53.

30. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #5.

31. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #4.

32. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, #13.

33. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #20.

34. John Paul II suggests in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, that to follow in Mary's footsteps in the feminine spousal dimension is to discover the special genius of our relation with Jesus, the Word made flesh, and the feminine maternal dimension by responding to this gift of Divine love with fruitful love which issues forth in new life for others. Woman is the one "who receives love in order to love in return..." #29.

35. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "One cannot correctly understand virginity- a woman's consecration in virginity- without referring to spousal love. It is through this kind of love that a person becomes a gift for the other. Moreover, a man's consecration in priestly celibacy or in the religious state is to be understood analogously.", #20.

36. Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #30.

37. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way. Of course God entrusts every human being to each and every other human being. But this entrusting concerns women in a special way--- precisely by reason of their femininity- and this in a particular way determines their vocation... A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting, strong because of the fact that God 'entrusts the human being to her,' always and in every way..." #30.

38. See Pope John Paul II, *The Genius of Women*, (Washington DC: NCCB, 1997) for a compilation of his statements in 1995 on the topic. He envisages the flourishing of this genius of women as capable of transforming alienating structures of the world of business, of technology which tend to destroy the dignity of the human person.

39. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #31.

40. John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, #19.

41. John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman*, #18.

42. John Paul II, *Guardian of the Redeemer*, #20.

43. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #29.

44. John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to my Brother Priests*, (1979), 35.

45. Norms for Priestly Formation, 160.

46. Norms for Priestly Formation, 170.

47. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #29.

48. See Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, 184. See also, chapters 8-9.

49. This active receptivity of the Father's love can be noted in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. See, John Paul II, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," *Dives in Misericordia* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1980), #5ff.

50. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1987), #13.



51. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy," (1974), *Norms for Priestly Formation*, (Washington DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1982).

52. John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to my Brother Priests*, (1979), 35.

53. Norms for Priestly Formation, #32, 172.

54. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #49.

55. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #22.

56. John Paul II, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, #23.

57. Norms for Priestly Formation, 160.

58. In his description of the fatherhood of St. Joseph we find these qualities embellished along with the characteristic of the total gift of self in life and work in a hidden guardianship of the Word made flesh. Even St. Joseph is described as discovering the depth of his fatherhood through the events of life. As we find in the document #20 "From the beginning Joseph accepted with the 'obedience of faith' his human fatherhood over Jesus. And thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings through faith, he certainly came to discover every more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood. John Paul II, *Guardian of the Redeemer*, #20.

59. In a document on norms for the priesthood, in a section on spiritual fatherhood, we find the qualities of natural fatherhood listed as including: 1) an altruistic spirit, assumption of responsibilities, capacity for love and sacrifice, daily bearing of life's burdens and difficulties, and a wise caring for the future. These are all practical ways in which continuing acts of fatherhood is worked out. See, *Norms for Priestly Formation: A Compendium of Official Documents on Training Candidates for the Priesthood* (Washington DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1982), 172.